1: McGee E-5 (1894-1895)1898 NU31 Seri NU31

THE SERI INDIANS

By W J McGee.

INTRODUCTION

Salient Features

Something has been known of the Seri Indians (Seris, Ceris, Ceres, Heris, Tiburones) since the time of Coronado, yet they remain one of the least-studied tribes of North America. The first systematic investigation of the tribe was made in the course of expeditions by the Bureau of American Ethnology in 1894 and 1895; it was far from complete. 114

The Seri Indians are a distinctive tribe in habits, customs, and language, inhabiting Tiburon island in Gulf of California and a limited adjacent area on the mainland of Sonora (Mexico). They call themselves *Kwe-kwak* or *Kwike:* their common appellation is from the Opata, and may be translated "spry". Their habitat is arid and rugged, consisting chiefly of desert sands and naked mountain rocks, with permanent fresh water in only two or three places; it is barred from settled Sonora by a nearly impassable desert. Two centuries ago the population of the tribe was estimated at several thousands, but it has been gradually reduced by almost constant warfare to barely three hundred and fifty, of whom not more than seventy-five are adult males, or warriors. 101 [131] 133 161

The Seri men and women are of splendid physique; they have fine chests, with slender but sinewy limbs, though the hands and especially the feet are large; their heads, while small in relation to stature, approach the average in size; the hair is luxuriant and coarse, ranging from typical black to tawny in color, and is worn long. They are notably vigorous in movement, erect in carriage, and remarkable for fleetness and endurance. 142 [147]

The Seri subsist chiefly on turtles, fish, mollusks, water-fowl, and other food of the sea; they also take land game, and consume cactus fruits, mesquite beans, and a few other vegetal products of their sterile domain. Most of their food is eaten raw. They neither plant nor cultivate, and are without domestic animals, save dogs which are largely of coyote blood. 105

The habitations of the Seri are flimsy bowers of cactus and shrubbery, sometimes shingled rudely with turtle-shells and sponges; in some

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the upper end of the staff was suspended by a cord 12 or 14 inches long a round stone ball, and to this ball was fastened another string furnished with bits of cork, surrounded with small feathers stuck into them at the distance of about 3 inches apart; the only use of the stone ball being to prevent the wind from blowing out horizontally the string which was furnished with feathers. . . .'. Upon examining the bunky pile, I discovered a wooden figure with a carved hat, and others of different shapes and sizes, as well also as leathern bags, the contents of which I was not permitted to explore.[1]

He also mentions that "in their festivities the Indians wear the head (with the horns on)" of the buru or mule deer. He adds:

It is believed that the Córoa Indians have discovered a method of poisoning their arrows, and that they do it in this way: They kill a cow and take from it its liver. They then collect a number of rattlesnakes, scorpions, centipedes, and tarantulas, which they confine in a hole with the liver. The next process is to beat them with sticks in order to enrage them, and being thus infuriated, they fasten their fangs and exhaust their venom upon each other and upon the liver. When the whole mass is in a high state of corruption the old women take the arrows and pass their points through it. They are then allowed to dry in the shade, and it is said that a wound inflicted by them will prove fatal. Others again say that the poison is obtained from the juice of the yerba de la flécha (arrow weed).[2]

He purchased some of the arrows, which were stone-tipped, and had "certainly had an unguent applied to them".

He was impressed by indications of family affection, and noted the custom of having two wives. Concerning tribal relations he says:

These people have been always considered extremely ferocious, and there is little doubt, from their brave and warlike character, that they may formerly have devastated a great part of the country; but in modern days their feuds are nearly confined to a neighboring tribe of the same name as themselves (Córoa), who speak the same language and in all probability originally descended from the same stock. They are said to be inferior to those of this island both in courage and stature, and they are never suffered to cross the channel. From what I was told . . . the Tiburon Córoa have lately returned from a sanguinary war with the Tépoca Córoa, in which the former were victorious.[3]

Later in his itinerary Hardy noted a typical Yaqui revolution, with a characteristic effort to secure the cooperation of the Seri.[4] He defined the Seri habitat as "the island of Tiburon, the coast of Tepoca, and the pueblo of Los Córoa, near Pitic";[5] and he estimated the population at "3,000 or 4,000 at the very utmost",[6] and quoted the estimate of Don José María Redin, viz, that the Seri population of Tiburon was 1,000 to 1,500.[7]

Like most of those visitors to the Seri who have returned to tell their tale, Hardy "praised the bridge that carried him over" and gave the tribe passable character—worse, of course, than that of any other, yet hardly so bad as painted at Pitic.

A noteworthy traveler in western America during 1840–1842 was M. Duflot de Mofras, an attaché of the French legation in Mexico. He

[1] Op. cit., pp. 190–200.
[2] Ibid. pp. 200, 201.
[3] Ibid., pp. 201, 202.
[4] Ibid., p. 205 et seq.
[5] Ibid., p. 427.
[6] Ibid., p. 428.
[7] Ibid., pp. 205, 206.

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1775 reached; they endure a thousand miseries on the island, yet the love they have for it is incredible. They are always accompanied by innumerable dogs, . . . which they have domesticated.[1]

Velasco adds:

The Curis subsist on fish, the seeds of grass, and countless shrubs, as well as on the flesh of horses and deer, which they kill. There is no better proof of this fact than this—on approaching the said Curis, one instantly perceives that their bodies exhale an intolerable stench, like that of a corpse of eight or more days, totally rotten, so that it is necessary to withdraw far as possible from them.[2]

Of all the Indian tribes known in Sonora, none are more barbarous and uncivilized than the Curis. They are perverse to the limit, vicious beyond compare in drunkenness, infinitely filthy, the bitterest enemies of the whites, like the worst of the Indians.[3]

He adds also that the men wear a pelican-skin robe and a breechclout of cotton cloth, with most of the body uncovered; "they have their faces painted or barred with prominent black lines. They use no foot-gear of any kind, and many have the nasal septum pierced and adorned with pieces of greenstone or ordinary glass." "They are robust in stature, tall and straight, generally with bright black eyes. The women are not uncomely, and of bronzy color [de color abronzado]. Their clothing is made of pelican skins fastened together, retaining the feathers; with this they are covered from the waist downward", the remainder of the body being bare. The women of Hermosillo provide them with cast off garments when they approach the city, and these they wear, unwashed, until they fall to pieces. "The said tribe, in addition to being the vilest and most brutal known in the country, are preeminently treacherous and traitorous, so that forty of their outbreaks may be counted during the efforts to reduce them to civilized life." At the time of the Cimarrones outbreak, the Seri of Tiburon and Tepoka numbered 2,000; [161] "to day [about 1846 or 1847], counting the 250, which are all that inhabit Tiburon and the most that can be presented, including the Tepoka Seri [los Curis Tepocas], who have always been much fewer, their whole number will not amount to 500 persons of all sexes and ages, and the warriors can not exceed 60 or 80 at the most." The Seri are not polygamous, though apparently promiscuous ("se nota en sus matrimonios mucha tolerancia mútamente"). They "adore the moon, which they venerate and respect as a deity; when they see the new moon, they kneel and make obeisance; they kiss the earth and make a thousand genuflections, beating their breasts."[4]

1775 The remarkably vigorous expedition of Andrade and Espence occurred within the memory of men still active, and naturally it lives in tradition at Hermosillo and Bacuache, and among the ranchos lying toward the border of Seriland; indeed, one of the two Mexicans accompanying the 1895 expedition, Don Ygnacio Lozania, retained shadowy impressions of participating in an invasion of the island, which could have been none other than that planned by Governor De

[1] Velasco, Noticias Estadísticas, pp. 169–171.
[2] Ibid., p. 172.
[3] Ibid., pp. 127–128.
[4] Ibid., pp. 131–132.

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the Seri are absolutely without extratribal affiliations, or even sympathy. When the chronicles of three centuries are scanned in the light of recent knowledge, it seems practically certain that they have been equally isolated since the dawn of Caucasian history in Mexico; and both recent data and the chronicles combine with the principles of demotic development to indicate that the Seri have stood alone from the beginning of their tribal career, and have never foregathered with the neighboring tribes of distinct blood, distinct arts and industries, distinct organization, distinct language, and distinct thought and feeling.

The present isolation of the Seri throws light on their early history and reveals the extent of the misapprehension of the pioneer missionaries, who half deluded themselves and wholly deluded distant readers into the notion that the Seri were really proselyted and actually collected in the mission adjuncts of military posts established to protect settlers against forays of the tribe; for, as illumined by later and fuller knowledge of the tribal characteristics, the chronicles are seen to indicate merely that a few captives, malingerers, cripples, spies, and tribal outcasts were harbored at the missions until death and occasional escapes brought the colonies to a natural end, with no real assimilation of blood or culture on either side. So, too, the persistent tribal antipathy reveals the error of confounding the independent or even inimically related outbreaks of the Seri and of the Pima or Apache with the concerted action of confederated tribes. Doubtless the ever-watchful spies from Tiburon habitually gave notice of the disturbance due to outbreaks of contemporary tribes, just as they do today when the local soldiery are withdrawn for duty on the Yaqui frontier; naturally the civil and military authorities were thereby led to provide for protection against the Seri and Piato, against the Seri and Pima, or against the Seri and Apache at each period of disturbance, just as they provided against the Seri between periods; and it would appear that this association in thought and speech led to the unconscious magnification, in the minds of the chroniclers, of a supposed alliance.

In brief, the tribal relations of the Seri seem always to have been antipathetic, especially toward the aboriginal tribes of alien blood, in somewhat less measure toward Caucasians, and in least—yet still considerable—degree toward their own collinguals and (presumptive) consanguineals.

POPULATION

So far as could be ascertained by inquiries of and through Masbém in 1894, the Seri tribe then comprised about 60 or 70 warriors, with between three and four times as many women and children—i. e., the population was apparently between 270 and 350. The group of about 60 (including 17 warriors) seen at Costa Rica was evidently growing rapidly, to judge from the proportion of youths of both sexes, infants in arms, and pregnant women; and there are other indications that

I: McGee Z-3 (1894-1895)1895 NU31 Seri NO31

the tribe is prolific and well-fitted to survive unless cut off in consequence of the hereditary antipathy toward alien blood and culture. 161

The population estimates of the past are naturally vague. In 1645 Ribas spoke of the tribe as "a great people"; and a century later Villa-Señor expressed himself in somewhat similar terms, and described their range in such manner as to indicate a population running into thousands. A few years after Villa-Señor (in 1750), Partilla claimed to have annihilated the entire tribe, with the exception of 28 captives; but according to Velasco's estimates, the people numbered fully 2,000 some thirty years later, when the tribe was, however, once more nominally annihilated. In 1824 Troncoso estimated the Seri at over 1,000, and two years later Ortiz reckoned the population of Isla Tiburon alone at 1,000 or 1,500, while Hardy thought the entire tribe might number 3,000 or 4,000 at the utmost. About 1841 De Mofras put the aggregate population at 1,500; and at the time of the vigorous invasion by Andrade and Espence (1844), when a considerable number of the tribe were captured and a few slain, the total population was estimated at about 550—though it is probable that a good many tribesmen were left out of the reckoning. According to the chroniclers, a number of the Seri were slain after, as well as before, this invasion; and in 1846 Velasco estimated the tribe at less than 500, including 60 or 80 warriors. This estimate was in harmony with that made by Señor Encinas, who reckoned the tribe at 500 or 600 at the beginning of his war, in which half the tribe lost their lives. The figures of Velasco and Encinas correspond fairly with the reckoning by Mashbn in 1891, due allowance being made for natural increase and for the losses through occasional skirmishes; and Mashém's count is shown not to be excessive by the considerable number of jacales and rancherias and well-trodden pathways found throughout Seriland in 1895.

On the whole it seems probable that the Seri population extended well into the thousands at the time of the Caucasian invasion; it seems probable, also, that the body was then too large for stability under its feeble institutional bonds, and hence threw off by fission the Tiburon and Upanguayma fractions, and the Angeles, Populo, and Pueblo Seri fragments. Furthermore, it seems probable that the prolific group fairly held its own against these normal losses and repeated decimations by battle up to the Miguelefes-Cimarrones war of 1780, despite the vauntel annihilation in 1750; but that thenceforward the death-rate due to increasingly frequent encounters with incoming settlers exceeded the birth-rate, gradually reducing the tribe from some 2,000 to the 250 or 300 surviving the Encinas conflict. Finally, it seems probable that the tribe has again held its own and perhaps increased slowly under the renewal isolation of the last decade or two.

2: Kroeber E-5 (1930)1931 NU31 Seri NU31

stonization. The Pima are so uniform in speech from the Gila to the Mayo that their territory must be assumed to have been continuous at no remote date.

Seri Population Estimates
After McGee, page 135

1730,	Velasco	2,000
1824,	Tremenno	1,000+
1826,	Ratin, Tiburon only	1,000-1,500
1826,	Hardy	3,000-4,000
1841,	de Mofras	1,500
1844,		150
1848,	Velasco	500—
c. 1855,	Encinas	500-600
c. 1868,	Encinas	250-300
1894,	Mashdm, native	250-350
1930,	Thomson	175

&Davis & Downs S-5 (1922-1960) 1945
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222 forests of giant cacti (Fig. 9) provide during this season an unlimited supply of "pitahayas" toward which the tribespeople customarily moved to accomplish the annual harvest. The fruits were readily knocked down by means of long poles and, when ripe, the spines were easily brushed off, leaving a luscious pulp as big as a fig. During the height of the season all the clans withdrew from the coast and gave their undivided attention to the collection and consumption of the cactus fruit, gorging tremendous quantities for weeks until waning supply and cloying appetite drove them back to the more severe hunt for turtle and pelican.

252 262 514 Perhaps the only germ of thriftiness in the Seris is shown by a peculiar custom with respect to the pitahayas. The fruits, eaten in such enormous quantity, were imperfectly digested, the hard-coated seeds particularly passing through the body unchanged. Using [415] [251] large seashells, the feces containing these seeds were collected and preserved with some care. Thus, when the harvest of fresh fruits was over, there remained a hoard of these dry, nutritious discharges which were ground on the stone abst, winnowed in a shallow basket and made into a meal to be eaten, either dry, as a watery atole, or mixed with turtle grease to form a thick paste.

614 Although the Seri's omnipresent problems of food-getting and of personal subsistence have been of particular interest, the lost social customs of the tribe deserve a moment's attention. Before the death of all [161] but a few of the 2,000–3,000 Seris at the hands of invading Spaniard and Mexican, the tribe consisted of a number of conspicuous maternal clans, each of which was presided over by a zoic tutelary such as the Pelican, the Turtle, the Rattlesnake, or the Badger. The totemic symbols denoting the 302 386 614 various beast-gods and incidentally indicating the blood-carriers of clans dedicated to them, consisted of elaborate designs painted upon the face (Fig. 10). In accord with their savagery in which the social organization was based on blood kinship reckoned in the female line, under ordinary circumstances, the faces only of the females were painted. Colored minerals pounded to powder afforded the pigments for the paint-

[p. 201(A)]

648 726 [161] The Encinas war reduced the tribe to some 250 people, and temporarily discouraged their bloodthirsty raids. By 1893, however, new killings were being reported. In one instance the Seri Chief, Juan Tomas (Fig. 14), watched as the men of a large rancho left for a rodeo and then, worming up through the brush, led his warriors into the buildings and with clubs and arrows massacred every woman and child within. Two Yaqui women who had managed to escape into the brush watched as the warriors seized [727] the infants by their feet and dashed their brains out against a large rock near the corral.

In 1904 a number of wilder Seri, led by several Yaquis, went on the warpath and killed every soul in a Papago village. The war with the Papagos that ensued aroused the Governor of Sonora into action. Nearly 250 armed men were sent out to kill or capture the Yaqui leaders and to administer a severe lesson to the Seris. The desert water holes were all placed under guard until the Seri chief, Juan Tomas, was forced to surrender for his thirsting tribesmen. Peace was conditional on the delivery of the Yaqui leaders with their hands tied together. Two days later a couple of gaunt, wild-looking Seri women, clothed in rags and with painted faces, walked into the camp to keep the conditions of the peace as they had understood them. They carried a palanca between them from which were suspended bundles of severed hands of the Yaquis who had been clubbed to death as they slept.

114 648 Twenty years after the delivery of the Yaqui hands (1922) the senior author, under arrangement with the Museum of the American Indian in New York, carried out his first expedition into the heart of Seriland. Although still intolerant of aliens and at times dangerous if aggravated, their depredations had been reduced to the occasional killing of a stray cow. The Seris had come to live a comparatively peaceful life under the supervision of Roberto Thomson of Hermosillo. It was through his efforts that the Seris were saved from complete extermination by the vaqueros of Sonora, and after having treated them for many years as a friend and adviser, he had made it feasible for a visitor to enter

[p.263(A)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-S (1922-1940) 1945
NU3I Seri NU3I

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their midst and to live among them without undue fear of losing his life. Through the kindness of Señor Thomson the senior author succeeded in making himself a friend of the Seri and, enlarging upon this friendship through long periods of living and traveling among them, has acquired an intimate knowledge of these strange people.

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In 1922 the fishing industry of the Gulf of California was not yet well developed, and it was to be ten years before the village of Kino should appear on the maps of the Sonora coast. The Seris were still isolated in their desert domain and their numbers, then about 250, were maintaining themselves out of reach of the infectious diseases of the white man. The clan life had disappeared, and the people lived as a single tribe with their old chief, Juan Tomas, 90 years old at that time

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FIG. 15. MOVING DAY AMONG THE SERIS
THESE BURDENS, BORNE FOR MANY MILES OVER ROCKS, THROUGH CACTUS AND DEEP SAND, CONTAIN UTENSILS FOR HOUSEKEEPING WHEREVER THE SERIS MAY STOP.

[p.263(B)]

S:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1945
MUSI Seri MUSI

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Sea turtle was still the staple meat, and with better boats and improved tools and tackle borrowed from the Mexicans, the living was becoming considerably less harsh along the shores. They then had nine boats for some two hundred people. One good boat could secure a living for five families, and they had well improved this minimum standard of living.

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The origin of the use of fire among the Seri's is unknown, but they have their own story of it. One day Chico Romero, present chief of the Seris (Fig. 19), made a fire drill out of a piece of dry driftwood and showed how to make a fire by turning the stick between the hands. In three or four minutes the fine dust became a glowing punk which, with the aid of some dry grass and the wind, was quickly fanned into a flame. He was then induced to tell the legend. He looked about and pointed to a little green and blue-bodied fly and said: "The gods sent this fly down from the sky to show us how to make fire. Notice when it lands. Did you not see

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FIG. 19. THE NATIVE DANCE
IS DONE ON TOP OF A TURTLE SHELL TO THE BEAT OF A BOW STRING BEING STRUCK WHILE THE BOW IS HELD AGAINST TWO INVERTED BASKETS OF SAND.

[p. 265 (B)]

3:Davis & Dawson E-5 (1922-1940) 1944
NU31 Set NU31

They are mostly of ocotillo sticks and mesquite branches stood up in the sand, lashed together, and plastered with mud for protection from the wind, but not from the rain (Fig. 22). When the fishing season ends about Holy Week, they all move away to the turtle grounds on Tiburon Island, where they also hunt deer. Then in June and July they go into the desert hills to reap the harvest of cactus fruit, retiring to the lowlands thereafter to harvest the mesquite beans and to await the recurrence of the big fish. In and about Kino they are reasonably well fed and clothed, and were it not for their susceptibility to disease they would be as well-off as many of the Mexicans. Influenza strikes them heavily, however, and pneumonia is common, usually fatal. Their numbers dwindle and their extinction is in sight, yet for a little while these strange people will continue to tread the rocks and thorns of their desert land, a handful of Nature's primitive creatures, through whose veins flows the blood of thoroughbred American aborigines.

[p.268(C)]

[89 cont.]

000 abundant flying and, especially, marine fauna.

For a modern technology, their region has great resources,
511 but for the culture of the Seri it is frankly inhospitable. The standard of living is exceedingly low, as is proclaimed by natives and foreigners and as is demonstrated by the illnesses and hunger that weaken the population.

[90] The Seri truly form part of our Western society, in
226 so far as they catch fish, with fishhooks and motorboats, to sell
439 in the markets of Hermosillo, Nogales, and Tucson, and they
[179] obtain payments in national specie and coin. The part that
182 they form, however, has its own internal structure, which regulates the relations with the environment and among its mem-
[161] bers, even though a group of 218 persons, which suffers severe alterations in percentages from disasters like the sinking of a boat or strokes of good luck like the establishment of a prosperous fishing camp, is almost insignificant for the nation.

Most probably they have never been much more numerous, and they must not have had great cohesion in the past, a situation explicable in view of their nomadic gathering economy.
621 Toward the close of the 18th century they were divided into bands, of which it is known that the most important were the Guaymas, Upanguaymas, Tepocas, Tiburones, and Salineros.
[648] They banded together at various times in order to defend themselves and to attack the nuclei of Mexicans of the zone, achieving combined action, but without effective political unity.

619 At present they seem to form a single group without marked subdivisions, although they recognize affiliations like that of "Tiburones," "half-Papago," etc., which appear to have little real classificatory significance.

184 There is great uniformity: they speak a single language
619 incomprehensible to the rest of humanity; they have a relatively uniform culture, and there is tribal unification for matters involving sexual exchange.

361 The most obvious relations are spatial; they have important settlements that sprung up around the fishing establishments and are more or less permanently occupied. Of these, "El Desemboque," close to the mouth of a river from which they have been displaced, is the most important, with 80 per cent of the Seri

8: Ascher E-5 (1960) 1962 NU31 Seri NU31

Elsewhere (Ascher 1961) I have disputed this portrayal of the potential of existing ethnography, citing examples where qualitative and quantitative models have been constructed from ethnography and suggesting that one task for archeology is to codify the literature in a manner useful to itself. Regardless of doubts about existing ethnographies for archeological purposes, the worth of future ethnography for archeology will depend on the acquisition of the relevant kinds of information. Although discussion on the subject has been recorded (Tax *et al.* 1953: 229-232), no specific guides have been produced. This paper provides and discusses an example, which can be used as a paradigm, model, or guide of the kind of information to be collected from ongoing communities which would be of general value for archeology. The subject culture is that of the Seri Indians of Sonora, Mexico; the example describes a persistent trait complex associated with fishing for the Pacific green turtle, with particular emphasis on one trait in the complex, the harpoon foreshaft.

Example from the Seri Indians

The Seri, who numbered approximately 200 individuals in 1960, occupy a band of coastal desert about four miles wide and seventy miles long in the state of Sonora in western Mexico. The band extends along the Gulf of California from Kino Bay in the south to Desemboque in the north, opposite the largest island in the Gulf, Tiburon. Although the region is desert, with an estimated average rainfall of less than eight inches per year, falling mostly in July and August, it is comparatively rich in succulents and small land mammals. The Gulf forms a natural trap for large fish and marine mammals and is a breeding ground for the Pacific green turtle. The scantiness of fresh water has constituted, in the past and present alike, the single crucial limiting factor to agriculture and human occupancy.

In the past the Seri may have comprised from four to six tribal groups, and they were certainly numerically larger, with a maximum estimated population of 2,000 (Kroeber 1931: 53, 30). Until very recently they also occupied Tiburon Island, and at some more remote period they extended south, north, and east over a territory whose bounds are uncertain (Kroeber 1931: 5). On the basis of linguistic change, Kroeber (1931: 54) calculated that the Seri could have inhabited this general region for 1,000 years. It is uncertain whether the original occupation stemmed from Baja California via the Gulf of California or from the north and west via an overland route or routes (Kroeber 1931: 39-51). The first contact with Europeans occurred as early as 1540 (McGee 1898: 51).

In culture content the Seri are most closely affiliated with the Pima (Kroeber 1931: 51), but they do not share the practice of agriculture with them or with their western neighbors. The Seri are primarily fishermen; secondarily they gather the fruits of succulents; and to a still lesser extent they hunt game. McGee (1898: 214)

9:Malkin F-5 (1953-1955)1962 MUSI Seri MUSI

II

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OUTLINE OF SERI CULTURE

Territory

131 Historically the Seri territory at its greatest expansion extended from the coast of Mar del Cortez to Hermosillo and from Porto Libertad to Guaymas and included also the Tiburon Island. 101 Ethnically, the Seris represented a collection of [197] dialectically distinct tribes, the Guyma, Tepoca, etc., perpetually at war with each other, whose common characteristic was their culture, and who were framed in to the north by the Pima Alto and Papago, to the west by the now extinct Cochimi, to the east by the Onata and Pima Bajo and to the south by the Cahita, Mayo and the Yaqui.

648 But their area had fluctuated much. After the 131 bitter and disastrous wars against the Mexicans from the late 18th century through most of the 19th, the Seris lost out and were forced by the Mexican government to settle on Tiburon. This incarceration did not last long. McGee had already in 1894 found them on the mainland and Kroeber found them equally divided between Tiburon and Kino. In 1930 when he visited, evidently they lived largely in Kino Bay. As the Mexicans pressed on Kino moving in, in ever greater numbers, and as Japanese fisheries worked the Gulf out of Desemboque attracting the fish-loving Seris, their main settlement has moved once more. About 1940 most of the Seris moved into Desemboque and at the time of my visit, almost all of them lived [361] there while only two families made Tiburon their "permanent" camp. School and availability of the medical facilities as well as the location of the Mexican traders in Desemboque, part of whose scheme the Indians have become, attracted the Seris. Only occasionally today they roam inland or visit other areas, either owing to the hunting or fishing expeditions.

Numbers

●161 Seri numbers fluctuated as much as their territory and had suffered immense diminution. I shall list the estimates below, indicating the source of the information:

	Authority		Source
1780	Velasco	2,000	McGee
1824	Troncoso	1,000+	"
1826	Ratio (Tiburon only)	1,000-1,500	"
1826	Hardy	3,000-4,000	"
1841	de Mofras	1,500	"
1844	...	550	"
1846	Velasco	500	"
c.1855	Encinas	500-600	"
c.1865	"	250-300	"
1894	Mathews, native	250-350	"
1930	Thomson	175	Kroeber
1934	Mex. En. Cifras	160	Ethn. Synth. Mex.
1953	Smith, Jr.	248	MS. Univ. of Ariz.
1955	Malkin	236	Malkin

Malkin E-6 (1953-1956)1962 MUII Seri MUII

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OUTLINE OF SERI CULTURE

161 164 At the moment their number should have increased again, after a disastrous epidemic in the spring of 1965.

Biological Background

142 The Seris are somewhat atypical among the peoples of the general area in that they represent a very slender, sinewy, tall type. This is true of both men and women. This physical type in general is apt to be associated with the desert habitat and the Seris answer the requirements very well. As shall be seen, their economy also represents characteristic adaptation to the desert conditions of pre-agricultural people. 433

Economy

The Seris readily fell into the category of the pre-agricultural hunters and gatherers with one variant, dependence on the produce of the sea, whether marine turtles, fish or littoral invertebrates.

[241] Here the Seri provide another exception for the region. They are the only group that never had any agriculture. McGee has pointed out their lack of agricultural sense and this has also been mentioned by Kroeber and by incidental Mexican visitors. Of late years, some efforts have been made by the Mexican government and the American Friends' Service Committee to persuade them [648] toward agriculture, but to no avail. The Seris [464] occasionally hire out to the surrounding Mexican or American rancher-farmers but grow restless after a few days of cotton picking and retire, with their advanced pay lost to the employer. On the other hand, efforts to teach them related practices, well digging for example, also failed to interest them. To this day they remain much in the original pattern of economy.

262 114 McGee (1898:214) who had a chance to observe them from the first hand and who also had access to valuable information from the outsiders gives the following figures for their diet:

land game, large and small (incl. stolen stock)	21%
waterfowl and eggs, incl. pelican	13
sea-turtles	25
fish	15
shellfish	10
cactus fruit	9
other plants	5
miscellaneous	2
total animal 84%	marine 65%

Kroeber (1930:20) questions these figures and thinks that shellfish represents greater percentage than McGee indicated. He also thinks the use of turtles had been exaggerated. He figures the dependence on the animal diet as 75% and on marine 60% but he suspects that these figures are too high for a band with ready access to countless cacti and mesquite.

[P.6B]

11: Moser L-5 (1956-1961) 1963
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SERI BANDS

EDWARD MOSER

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ABSTRACT

105 621 642 614 [178] In previous publications on the Seri, frequent reference to distinct Seri groups points to historical tribal divisions at some level. Recent research among the Seri has determined the former existence of six bands which included three dialect groups. Three of the bands were subdivided into clans. These six bands, whose formation may have been caused largely by internal struggles, were eventually crushed and reduced to a single group by the devastation brought about by external conflict.

INTRODUCTION

101 13 [61] 178 621 642 121 621 642 The Seri tribe is located in Mexico along the coast of Sonora between Bahía Kino and Puerto Libertad, and on Tiburon Island (Fig. 1). Today it consists of approximately two hundred and eighty persons who call themselves *kongkaak*[1] "the people." Although at one time it was comprised of six distinct bands (Fig. 2), the tribe has now lost its band organization. However, much of the late history of these now-defunct tribal units remains vivid in the minds of the Seri. The purpose of this paper is to present some of the salient features of these former bands, to discuss certain interrelations between them, and to recount the Seri version of the disintegration of the band system.[2]

114 Three published studies on the Seri should be mentioned.[3] Of these, the reports by Kroeber and by Griffen are the more reliable. All three investigators mention tribal divisions which Griffen rightly designates as bands.

BANDS

642 101 131 BAND I *xika ʔai kkoii* "they who live toward the true wind"

This group is commonly referred to in the literature as the Tepoca or Salinero. As shown on Fig. 1, they inhabited an area which extended from a point slightly north of Puerto Lobos to Punta Tepopa on the south. The territory extended inland, encompassing the general area delimited by the San Ignacio River.

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the vessel to Guaymas. With the aid of a group of Yaqui, some of these women were said to have been permitted to go to Hermosillo and eventually to return to their home on Tiburon. Others of their group are said to have remained near Guaymas. The women who returned to Tiburon reported that the San Esteban women and children were put aboard another ship which sailed southward.

BANDS I, III, AND IV

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As opposition from the Papago and government forces increased, the members of Band I were forced to seek refuge on Tiburon Island. The mainland members of Band III (subdivisions 11 and 12) were also forced, especially during the Encinas Wars, to flee to Tiburon. There the combined forces of Bands I, III, and IV sought to cope with the military expeditions sent out through the years to exterminate them. Tiburon Island is an adverse battlefield for the uninitiated; some expeditions were turned back due to lack of potable water or because of failure to make contact with the enemy in the mountainous terrain. Some expeditions did encounter the Seri, however, and many natives were either killed or captured.

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Through the years, then, these military encounters, along with smallpox and measles epidemics, were responsible for reducing the Seri tribe to a small remnant. The band and clan systems lost their functional relevance as the people continued to live together for mutual protection. Shortly after the turn of the century, the expeditions and raids had practically ceased.

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SIGNIFICANCE OF BANDS TODAY

With the dissolution of the band system, the rule of descent shifted from patrilineal to bilateral, and the rule of residence shifted from patrilocal to neolocal.

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Although the substance of the band system is no longer a reality, the concept of land ownership still remains. A young Seri of today may choose to be associated with either the i?iriiting of his father or that of his mother. He is said to inherit part ownership of the area. It is recalled by one informant that in former times ownership of a mountain was especially important. Sometimes ownership of a mountain was included as part payment for a bride. Thus a person might 'own' a mountain in a subdivision other than his own.

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A custom exists even today whereby a person names his dog after a mountain or other geographical point located in his subdivision. Although the person may re-use the name, each dog so named must be of the same sex as the first.